

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the final Office Action dated April 14, 2009. Claims 1 to 3, 8, 17 and 18 are currently in the application, with claims 6, 7, 10 to 14 and 16 having been cancelled herein. Claims 1 and 8 are the independent claims. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Initially, Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication that claims 7 and 11 contain allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. As indicated above, claims 1 and 8 have been amended to incorporate the indicated allowable subject matter. Specifically, claim 1 has been amended to include the subject matter of claims 6 and 7, and claim 8 has been amended to include the subject matter of claims 10 and 11. Accordingly, independent claims 1 and 8 are now believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claims 1, 2, 6, 8, 10 and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,605,042 ("Stutzenberger") in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,557,108 ("Torimoto"). Claims 3 and 18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Stutzenberger in view of Torimoto and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,513,323 ("Weigl"). Without conceding the correctness of these rejections, independent claims 1 and 8 have been amended to incorporate allowable subject matter, as indicated above, thereby rendering the § 103(a) rejection of these claims moot.

The remaining claims depend from either independent claim 1 or independent claim 8 and are believed to be allowable over the applied references for at least the same reasons. Because each dependent claim is deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual consideration of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendment and remarks, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

To the extent, necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 502203 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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